

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 04791 011156Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----022587 011351Z /45

R 011027Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6993
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
USCINCEUR

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4791

EXDIS

MILI ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: MILI, MOPS, LE, IS, SY
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION

REF STATE 148797

1. TO FOLLOW UP AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION OF LEBANON WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON (SEPTTEL), DCM AND POLITICAL OFFICER CALLED ON MOSHE SASSON, MFA'S DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, JUNE 30, JOSEPH HADASS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ISRAELI COUNTERPART TO INR, AND RAVIV AND BAVLI OF NORTH AMERICA DEPARTMENT WERE ALSO PRESENT.

2. DCM POINTED OUT THAT DEPARTMENT WISHED TO RENEW EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WHICH WE HAD FOUND USEFUL IN THE PAST AND POINTED OUT THAT A SIMILAR APPROACH WAS BEING MADE IN DAMASCUS. HE THEN HANDED OVER A COPY OF THE KEY POINTS IN PARA 4 OF
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 04791 011156Z

REFTEL. AFTER THESE POINTS WERE READ ALOUD, SASSON SAID THAT THE GOI WOULD NATURALLY WANT TO STUDY THE SITUATION BEFORE GIVING US A DEFINITIVE REPLY. HE ASKED WHETHER ANY OF THOSE PRESENT ANY HAD ANY PRELIMINARY COMMENTS.

3. HADASS, AN IRAQI JEW WHO HAS FOLLOWED THE LEBANESE

SITUATION CLOSELY, PICKED UP THE CUE AND MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS. THE SYRIANS WERE OBVIOUSLY USING THE ISRAELI BOGEYMAN TO SERVE THEIR OWN DESIGNS IN LEBANON. THEY DO NOT REALLY BELIEVE IN THIS BOGEYMAN BUT IT DOES SUIT THEIR PRESENT PURPOSES. SINCE OCTOBER 1976, SOUTHERN LEBANON HAS BEEN SUFFERING FROM THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO DECLARATION OF 1969 BETWEEN THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE PALESTINIANS. THE LEBANESE AND THE SYRIANS ACCEPT THAT THE LATTER WILL GUARD THE PALESTINIAN CAMPS UNTIL A SUITABLE LEBANESE ARMY HAS BEEN FORMED. THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM HAS BEEN HOW TO DISARM THE PALESTINIANS OF THEIR HEAVY WEAPONS, AND A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON THAT ISSUE. ARAFAT HAD PROMISED TO SUPPORT THIS AGREEMENT BUT HAD THEN URGED OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO RESTRAIN THE SYRIANS FROM CARRYING IT OUT. THE SAUDIS HAD BACKED ARAFAT IN THIS. (COMMENT: WE NOTE IN BEIRUT'S 3048 THE REMARK ATTRIBUTED TO ASAD THAT ARAFAT WAS "A CONSTANT LIAR WHOM YOU CANNOT TRUST.")

4. BOTH SASSON AND HADASS DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES WERE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS OF AN IMPENDING ISRAELI INTERVENTION IN SOUTH LEBANON- WHICH WAS NOT IN THE CARDS IN ANY CASE, THEY MAINTAINED. RAVIV POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN MANY RUMORS TO THIS EFFECT IN RECENT MONTHS AND URGED THAT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEL AV 04791 011156Z

THEY NOT BE GIVEN CREDENCE. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO BASIC CHANGE IN THE SITUATION SINCE AMBASSADOR LEWIS' RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH WEIZMAN AND GAZIT.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE NOT DETECTED ANY AIR OF UNDUE CONCERN ABOUT LEBANON EITHER IN THE MFA OR THE MOD, NOR HAVE OUR MILITARY ATTACHES OBSERVED ANY CHANGES IN READINESS OR TROOP DISPOSITION WHICH WOULD SIGNAL MOVEMENT FROM THE ISRAELI SIDE. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE "DEFINITIVE" REPLY WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED TO OUR CURRENT DEMARCHE WILL NOT DIFFER GREATLY FROM THE COMMENTS ABOVE.
LEWIS

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NNN

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